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Department of State **TELEGRAM**

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-06 H-02 INR-06 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-10 P-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 SAL-02 AID-20
CU-04 RSR-01 /100 W
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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0724

SAIGON 15913 10/5/71

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 15913
FOLLOWING TELEGRAM FROM DANANG SENT SAIGON ON 4 OCT 71 REPEATED FOR YOUR INFORMATION:
QUOTE
C O N F I D E N T I A L DANANG 233

SUBJ: OBSERVATIONS ON PRESIDENTIAL REFERENDUM IN MILITARY REGION I

1. SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO GOVERNMENT FIGURES, 85 PERCENT OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS IN MR 1 WENT TO POLLS OCTOBER 3. CONSULATE QUESTIONS DANANG PARTICIPATION FIGURE OF 74 PERCENT. DEMONSTRATIONS AND ROADBLOCKINGS IN AT LEAST TEN LOCATIONS PROBABLY INFLUENCED VOTER TURNOUT. MOST SERIOUS DISTURBANCES TOOK PLACE AT TINH HOI PAGODA WHERE FOUR POLICE WOUNDED AND ONE CIVILIAN KILLED BY FRAG GRENADES. VNQDD FACTIONS COOPERATING WITH AN QUANG IN PROTEST AGAINST GOVERNMENT. TOTAL CASUALTIES FOR DAY ESTIMATED AT ONE KILLED, EIGHT WOUNDED SERIOUSLY (COUNTING POLICE) AND TWENTY OTHERS LIGHTLY INJURED. ENEMY TERROR AND MILITARY ACTIVITY AGAINST REFERENDUM RELATIVELY LIGHT. END SUMMARY.

2. ALTHOUGH OFFICIAL TABULATION OF VOTES FOR AND AGAINST PRESIDENT THIEU HAS NOT YET BEEN RELEASED BY MR 1 ELECTION CENTRAL IN DANANG, FOLLOWING FIGURES ON PARTICIPATION HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED AS FINAL:

(1)

PROVINCE/CITY ELIGIBLE VOTERS VOTES CAST PERCENT PARTICIPATION

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [signature] DATE 1/26/82
RDS☐ or XDS☐ EXT. DATE
TS AUTH: REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED☑ RELEASABLE☑
RELEASE DENIED☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

QUANG TRI	127,762	111,637	89.0
HUE	62,558	42,045	67.1
THUA THIEN	192,936	158,114	81.9
DANANG	160,842	122,081	75.2
QUANG NAM	190,758	179,057	93.8
QUANG TIN	154,588	144,911	93.7
QUANG NGAI	241,572	205,164	85.0
TOTAL	1,131,016	963,009	85.0

3. REFERENDUM DAY IN DANANG. VOTING IN DANANG WAS MARRED BY SCATTERED INCIDENTS THROUGHOUT CITY. IN ABOUT TEN LOCATIONS STARTING 0700 PROTESTERS BUILT BONFIRES OF TIRES IN MIDDLE OF SEVERAL MAIN STREETS IN ATTEMPT TO BLOCK TRAFFIC. GROUPS RARELY EXCEEDED 50 PERSONS IN NUMBER AND WERE KEPT WITHIN BOUNDS BY POLICE BACKED IN SOME CASES BY ARVN. DISABLED VETERANS WERE IN EVIDENCE IN CHINA BEACH AREA(XXIV CORPS)WHERE AT LEAST FOUR TIRE
BONFIRES WERE LIT AND WHERE VETERANS WHEELED THEMSELVES ACROSS ROAD AT VARIOUS TIMES THROUGHOUT DAY. WHILE RELATIVELY SMALL IN DIMENSION AND LIMITED IN PARTICIPATION, THESE ROADBLOCKING ATTEMPTS CONTRIBUTED TO ATMOSPHERE OF TENSION AND PROBABLY INTIMIDATED SOME VOTERS INTO STAYING AWAY FROM POLLS. ROADBLOCKS ALSO INDICATIVE OF SOME COORDINATION BETWEEN STUDENTS, BUDDHISTS AND VETERANS. BY MID-MORNING TRAFFIC ON DANANG STREETS, BOTH FOOT AND VEHICLE, WAS EXTREMELY LIGHT. ALL STORES AND MARKETS WERE CLOSED AND THERE WAS LITTLE EVIDENCE OF MOVEMENT IN MANY PARTS OF CITY. DEMONSTRATORS CONCENTRATED EFFORTS IN DENSELY POPULATED CENTRAL AND SOUTH AREAS OF DANANG, PLUS TWO MAIN ROADS IN CHINA BEACH. THERE WAS NO ACTION TO SPEAK OF IN AREA OF CORDS BUILDING AND CONSULATE.

4. CONFRONTATIONS AT TINH HOI PAGODA. MORE SERIOUS CONFRONTATIONS TOOK PLACE AT AND NEAR TINH HOI PAGODA, WHERE SITUATION HAD BEEN SIMMERING SINCE SEPTEMBER 28, WITH POLICE AND

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MILITANT STUDENTS EXCHANGING FIREBOMBS AND TEAR GAS. LEADERS OF DANANG AN QUANG (THICH MINH CHIEU AND THICH MINH TUAN) DIRECTED OPERATION THIS LOCATION. CROWD VARIED

AT TIMES UP TO SEVERAL HUNDREDS. ARVN FORCE, INCLUDING ARMOR, IN EVIDENCE. ALSO PRESENT AT TINH HOI WERE ELEMENTS OF RIVAL THONG NHUT AND VU HUONG KHANH FACTIONS OF VNQDD, WHICH HAD JOINED FORCES TEMPORARILY AGAINST REFERENDUM AND MADE COMMON CAUSE WITH AN QUANG IN CONFRONTATIONS WITH POLICE. CONSIDERABLE TEAR GAS USED AND SHOTS FIRED INTO AIR THROUGHOUT MORNING. AT 0830 MEMBERS OF VNQDD YOUTH GROUP (REPORTEDLY VU HONG KHANH FACTION) THREW THREE FRAGMENTATION GRENADES WHICH WOUNDED FOUR NATIONAL POLICE FIELD FORCE. AT ANOTHER POINT BUDDHIST YOUTH, LED BY SIX MONKS, BECAME EMBROILED WITH POLICE BUT WERE SPLIT INTO SMALL GROUPS AND DISPERSED. BY 1400 MOST OF VIOLENCE HAD SUBSIDED. AT 1700 AERIAL RECON REVEALED CROWD OF ABOUT 300 TO 400 PERSONS STILL MASSED AT TINH HOI, APPARENTLY LISTENING TO SPEECHES. EVENING IN TINH HOI AREA WAS RELATIVELY CALM.

5. CONSULATE COMMENT ON VOTER PARTICIPATION. GIVEN FAIRLY WIDESPREAD (IF SPORADIC) MINI-CONFRONTATIONS, TOGETHER WITH SPIRITED STRUGGLE AT TINH HOI, AND NOTING VERY LIGHT MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE DURING MOST OF THE DAY THROUGHOUT DANANG, WE TEND TO VIEW THE GOVERNMENT'S OFFICIAL FIGURE OF 74 PERCENT PARTICIPATION WITH SOME SKEPTICISM. ON OCTOBER 4 THICH MINH CHIEU OFFERED CONSULATE OFFICER HIS PERSONAL ESTIMATE OF 20 PERCENT PARTICIPATION, WHILE OTHER VIETNAMESE TRAVELING ABOUT CITY MAKE GUESSTIMATES OF UP TO 50 PERCENT. THIS LATTER FIGURE COULD BE CLOSE TO ACCURATE. IN ANY EVENT, WE GATHER FROM FRAGMENTARY REPORTS ELSEWHERE IN MR I THAT DANANG EXPERIENCED MOST UPSETTING DEMONSTRATIONS, AND THIS IS REFLECTED EVEN IN THE GOVERNMENT FIGURE OF 74 PERCENT, LOWEST IN REGION EXCEPT FOR HUE CITY.

6. CASUALTIES. THERE IS STILL SOME CONFUSION ON NUMBER OF PERSONS KILLED OR WOUNDED IN DANANG CONFRONTATIONS. CONSULATE OFFICER WAS TOLD BY THICH MINH CHIEU PERSONALLY ON OCTOBER 4 THAT OPPOSITION AND BYSTANDERS SUFFERED ONE YOUTH KILLED (APPARENTLY BY FRAGMENT FROM VNQDD GRENADE), THREE OR FOUR SERIOUSLY INJURED AND ABOUT TWENTY OTHERS LIGHTLY INJURED ON OCTOBER 3. THIS FIGURE CHECKS OUT WITH OTHER SOURCES AND WE ACCEPT IT AS ACCURATE AT LEAST

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FOR PRESENT. PRESS REPORTS OF TWO BUDDHISTS KILLED, TWENTY SERIOUSLY WOUNDED AND FIFTY LIGHTLY INJURED SEEM EXAGGERATED. EIGHT NATIONAL POLICE WOUNDED OCTOBER 3, FOUR OF THEM SERIOUSLY, BRINGING TO THIRTEEN TOTAL OF POLICE WOUNDED DURING WEEK.

7. ENEMY ACTIVITY DIRECTED AGAINST REFERENDUM. ENEMY ACTIVITY DIRECTED AGAINST REFERENDUM DURING PERIOD OCTOBER 1-3 (PARTICULARLY OCTOBER 3) WAS REMARKABLY WEAK. ON REFERENDUM DAY ITSELF, QUANG TRI EXPERIENCED ATTACKS BY FIRE AT SIX LOCATIONS NEAR DMZ WHICH ARE FREQUENT RECIPIENTS OF ROCKET/MORTAR ROUNDS AND THIS CANNOT REALLY BE CONSIDERED EFFECTIVE ANTI-REFERENDUM ACTIVITY. IN THUA THIEN THERE WERE HANDFUL OF MINOR INCIDENTS. ALTHOUGH THERE WAS INCREASED INCIDENCE OF TERRORISM (ABDUCTIONS, ENTRY INTO HAMLETS, PROPAGANDIZING AGIANST REFERENDUM, ETC.) DURING WEEK BEFORE REFERENDUM IN GREATER QUANG NAM, MAJOR ENEMY EFFORT IN OCTOBER 1-3 PERIOD WAS ATTACKS BY FIRE AGAINST FRIENDLY MILITARY (RATHER THAN CIVILIAN TARGETS. IN DANANG CITY THERE WERE TWO PLASTIC CHARGE EXPLOSIONS NIGHT OF OCTOBER 2 ATTRIBUTABLE TO VC, AND AT LEAST ONE GRENADE WAS THROWN AT POLL ON OCTOBER 3. BUT THREATS TO INTERFERE WITH REFERENDUM THROUGT TERROR TACTICS WERE SIMPLY NOT CARRIED OUT TO SIGNIFICANT DEGREE. HOI AN AND QUANG NGAI CITY WERE HIT BY ROCKETS OCTOBER 2 AND 3 RESPECTIVELY, BUT THIS APPEARS TO HAVE HAD MARGINAL EFFECT ON VOTING. IF WE TAKE THREATS TO INTERFERE WITH REFERENDUM AT FACE VALUE, THEN ENEMY WAS NOTABLY UNSUCCESSFUL.

GP-3.

BROWN UNQUOTE:

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